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Challenging Linguistic Superiority Through Social Attitudes: Language Complexities of the Ukrainian Diaspora in the United States

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Abstract
The English language in the United States has a strong legacy of linguistic imperialism that started with bans on the use of languages spoken by indigenous people in the early 1800s. The assumptions behind those policies were that the English language was civilized and progressive, while all other languages were barbaric and improper. In this paper, I examine how the historic language policies in the United States continue to create barriers in non-native speakers' success and achievement in social and political spheres. I proceed by discussing the English-only policies and native language bans that started the legacy of English superiority in the United States. Secondly, I examine their impact on society at large, focusing on cultural stereotypes and attitudes toward non-native English speakers, and their influence on non-native individuals' inability to achieve the American Dream and be exemplary citizens. Thirdly, I explore how such social attitudes create feelings of inferiority as well as shame and refusal to speak in individuals' native languages. Fourthly, I discuss a case study of Ukrainian Diaspora in the United States, and Ukrainians' complex relationship with language policies in Ukraine and the United States. I conclude with how a more pluralistic and cross-cultural approach to linguistic acceptance and how ethnic language studies could improve relations within the Ukrainian Diaspora and society at large.

Introduction

Social attitudes toward language in the United States have been informed by three successive but historically overlapping trends: multilingualism, assimilation, and exclusion in relation to non-native English speakers. Multilingual policies and attitudes were in place between 1770 and 1820, and were influenced by the German, British, Spanish, and French colonists who brought their language and culture to the New World (Schmid, 2001). In contrast, indigenous cultures, populations in American territories like Puerto Rico, Latino/a, and Chicano/a people faced forced assimilation in which they were taught to be *civilized* Americans and punished for their cultural roots, starting with provisions for the expenditure of funds made by Congress in 1802 to bring "civilization among the aborigines" (Schmid, 2001). Attitudes and polices of linguistic exclusion were adopted in response to new waves of immigration during the early 1900s from Southern and Eastern Europe, as immigrants occupied less skilled jobs, lived in poorer areas and, were mostly unfamiliar with living in countries with democratic ideals. Each of these linguistic trends, in their own way, served the purpose of *Americanizing* different cultures, and resulted in

ideological assumptions, social attitudes, and cultural stereotypes toward those who did not speak English as their native language in the United States (Schmid, 2001; Feagin 1997). Americanization aimed to assimilate immigrants into Americans who spoke fluent English and supported American nationalism, culture, and democracy.

In this paper, I claim that among the tools that sustain linguistic imperialism in the United States are social attitudes which result in superiority of proper English, and internal shame as well as identity confusion for non-native speakers. Social attitudes are popular beliefs and stereotypes that ascribe to a particular group of people specific qualities said to be representative of that group as a whole. Usually, in regard to languages other than English, social attitudes have negative impacts on social acceptance of non-native speakers because there is a sustained ideology of linguistic superiority of the native English-speaking group above all others (Feagin, 1997). This ideology is sustained because of the strengthening ethno-nationalism and nativism, forceful assimilate people who exhibit linguistic differences, and the exclusion of those deemed unfit for the category of American citizens (Schmid, 2001). They also fuel the historic belief that English is a language of intelligent, educated, and progressive people (Schmid, 2001).

The impact of linguistic superiority of is evidenced by analyzing the experiences of the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States. Ukrainians faced Russian imperialism in their homeland, reclaimed their Ukrainian identity after immigrating to the United States, and then were excluded from their own Ukrainian identity because they spoke Russian (Sasynuik, 1999; Satzewich, 2003). Linguistic superiority was maintained by bans on Ukrainian language, destruction of all materials in Ukrainian, and discrimination against individuals who promoted or spoke Ukrainian. English language added complexity to the linguistic identity of Ukrainians since newcomers wanted to assimilate into American culture by learning English and being less involved in the activities of

the diaspora (Radzilowski, 2007). Linguistic superiority of the culturally-dominant language created not only the feeling of inferiority in Ukrainians and the desire to assimilate into society by distancing themselves and disassociating from their native culture, but also divisions and conflict within the Ukrainian communities at home and abroad (Bilaniuk 2003; Dzyuba 1968; Sasynuik, 1999;). The consideration of one language as superior also influenced native speakers of English to view Ukrainians as culturally inferior and undeserving of social respect and acceptance (Satzewich, 2000;).

The case study of the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States demonstrates that (a) challenging social attitudes regarding native languages that have been considered inferior has to be an important component in efforts to reclaim and revitalize native languages; (b) liberal nationalist groups and movements should take into account diverse languages and re-appropriate the use of *colonizing* languages (such as Russian, in the case of Ukrainians) instead of excluding those members who had to assimilate into the dominant linguistic ideology; and (c) instead of blaming individuals for speaking in their native languages or excluding them, scholars, academics, activists, and educators would do better to concentrate their efforts into challenging the social structures in place.

I proceed by focusing on the historic social and political attitudes toward the English language. I analyze what social attitudes have been produced and how those stereotypes in the United States were created and continue to reinforce unequal conditions in political and social spheres. Secondly, I use the case study of the Ukrainian Diaspora to analyze language attitudes in Ukraine and the United States, focusing on how the periods of *Russification* in Ukraine suppressed the development and growth of the Ukrainian language, language politics within the Ukrainian diaspora, and divisions that the language has created between so-called “true” and “disloyal”

Ukrainians. I look into how immigrants and political refugees from Ukraine defined themselves as Ukrainians in the diaspora, and how language affected their internal and external relationship with other people and cultures. Thirdly, I examine social attitudes that linguistic imperialism has produced I conclude with the discussion of the importance of exposing and challenging such negative social attitudes toward languages.

The History of Language Laws in the U.S.

Language attitudes and policies in the United States are strongly connected to the concepts of nationalism and American identity (Pac, 2012). They fuel and define national identity, create cohesion among groups of diverse individuals, contribute to social values, and establish a sense of peoplehood. Early attitudes toward the English language in the United States were greatly influenced by the desire to form and define what it meant to be an American. Fueled by a nativist agenda and linguistic pluralism, English became a symbol of the United States and Americanization:

> …after the establishment of the U.S., central to the Americanization process was a nativist agenda advocating English as a symbol of American identity. This nativist ideology was justified through an Anglo-Saxon historical linear narrative of US history by romanticizing English as a historical element of national unity, and by projecting English onto the future as an element of common destiny. (Pac, 2012)

Proper English language became one of the categories of national identity: it served as a dividing line between the "insiders" and "outsiders" (Schmid, 2001). Language became a powerful tool in separating people into those who belonged and those who did not, creating power structures and

categories of fitness, and requiring those who wanted to participate in political and social spheres to assimilate.

The first policies and attitudes toward the English language among the Founding Fathers of the United States and Western European immigrants between 1770 and 1820, were influenced by bilingual tendencies: immigrants brought their culture and language to the new continent and wanted to keep the traditions of their homelands. Besides preserving cultural roots, such attitudes were also informed by pragmatic politics: the attempts to attract more voters from diverse backgrounds to support a specific political party. Multilingual policies were useful in attracting voters because European immigrants to the United States were interested in maintaining their native languages and cultures. Education in regions that spoke Western European languages was often bilingual and there was a strong support for bilingual press and public documents (Kloss, 1977).

In contrast to multilingual policies for Western European languages, Native Americans in the United States faced forced assimilation and prohibition of their native languages. "From the onset, Europeans did what they could to eradicate Native American languages. The colonists set out to 'civilize' and Christianize the Indians, forcing them to assimilate to Western civilization and to speak English" (Schmid, 2001). In 1802, the United States Government created provisions for the expenditure of funds to promote "civilization" among Native American people (Schmid, 2001). The assumptions behind those provisions were that indigenous people were *barbaric* and *uncivilized* – they did not meet the qualifications needed to become American citizens. Thus their cultural artifacts had to be abandoned and eradicated. Educational establishments, such as boarding schools, began the mission of Americanizing indigenous children, teaching them how to behave, speak, dress, and talk like English-speaking white children (Schmid, 2001). Such schools often

punished and discouraged children from speaking in their native languages and dialects. Populations of American territories like Puerto Rico, Latino/a, and Chicano/a people faced similar coerced linguistic (Garcia Martinez, 1976).

The first two trends of American linguistic practices such as mandatory monolingualism and assimilation were defined by accommodating different identity groups into the category of American citizens who spoke proper English. These practices aimed to strengthen national pride and encourage unity. Often described as the *Melting Pot* – different cultures into Americans were melted, often forcibly. During the 1900s, the new wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, however, brought a new wave of nativism and nationalism aimed at restriction and exclusion of those immigrants. The new immigrants occupied less skilled jobs, lived in the poorest areas, and were not accustomed to democratic ideals (Schmid, 2001). The first English language requirement for naturalization was adapted in order to limit entrance of Southern and Eastern Europeans into the United States because they were seen as unfit for assimilation (Schmid, 2001). They were seen as less desirable because they were considered uneducated, less intelligent, and distant from democratic ideals and values. Fear that the new immigrants would "threaten the nation's ability to assimilate and Americanize different cultures" was one of the motivating factors behind those exclusionary policies and negative attitudes (Carter, Green, & Hapern, 1996).

The hostile relationship of citizens toward non-European languages created the strong divisions between good American citizens and foreigners unworthy of political and social interactions. English-speaking majority adopted the attitude that those who did not abandon their native language in favor of English were not Americans. When American identity started to associate with speaking English, the newly arrived immigrants and their children were compelled to learn and speak English in order to gain social acceptance and integration. (Schmid, 2001).

One of the objections to this analysis of linguistic oppression could appeal to the fact that the English language has created a national solidarity, unity, and a unique American identity among the people. However, it is also important to consider the negative consequences of linguistic policies that excluded, assimilated, and denied people their native cultures. Taking into account the negative impacts of language laws could help to liberate those who have been oppressed and continue to experience language discrimination daily. National identity of the United States produced and maintained by the English language need not be dismissive or exclusionary to different ethnic languages and cultures, but can appreciate and welcome multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Social Attitudes towards Non-native Speakers

The historic periods of linguistic multilingualism, assimilation, and exclusion have influenced different negative social attitudes in the United States towards non-native English speakers, which prevailed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Stritikus, 2002). Those attitudes produced and maintained inequality in educational, social and political spheres, workplaces, and media representation between native and non-native speakers of English.

Social attitudes that I discuss are divided into two categories. The first is blaming non-English speaking individuals' capabilities for low academic, social, and political success, ignoring larger institutional structures that are in place in society. This blame creates views of others as less intelligent, leads to assimilative and often unproductive English-language systems of education, and produces inequality by benefitting native speakers' access to social privileges. The second is a feeling of inferiority that non-native speakers develop as a result of internalization of such hostile attitudes: they refuse to speak their native language, think of themselves as inferior, and have a

confusion of their identity and their role in society. Such attitudes result in difficulties to achieve the socially-defined goals of the American Dream and be accepted members of society.

Lost in Search of the American Dream

There was a prevailing view during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that those who did not speak English as their native language were intellectually inferior: "By the early twentieth century, the prevailing scientific community believed there was a close relationship between lack of English and lower intelligence" (Schmid, 2001). The political and social majority perceived the qualities of laziness, lack of intellect, and linguistic inferiority as inherent characteristics of non-native speakers' groups: "…the social majority does not perceive language and ethnic minorities' deprivations as outcomes of institutionalized language discrimination, but as inherent characteristics of these language groups, and the cause of their economic failure and poverty" (Pac, 2012). This allowed the majority to overlook the roots of the problem and justify social inequality and oppression.

The view that non-native speakers are intellectually inferior because of their inherent characteristics was helpful in assimilating non-native speakers and requiring them to learn English because English was seen as a form of liberation from "barbarism" and a path toward "civilization" (Schmid, 2001). Those who could not succeed in English were considered unfit for assimilation into American citizens because having poor English skills and a strong foreign accent would be the dividing line between those who were *normal* citizens and those who were *aliens* (Schmid, 2001). Those attitudes that considered non-English speakers to be intellectually deficient were self-reinforcing because they blamed individual actors for their laziness, deficiency in intellect and their inability to be successful.

Systems of education were often designed in ways that would disadvantage those who did not speak English as their native language (Pac, 2012). Firstly, non-native speakers had to go through the intensive English programs before they could take advanced classes, which would put them behind. Secondly, they often lived in lower socio-economic conditions and were excluded from social benefits and opportunities, which prevented them from being able to access special classes, activities, and school materials (Pac, 2012).

The negative attitudes of superiority of native English speakers resulted in support for intensive English education classes in most high schools around the United States, which necessarily required students to distance themselves from their native languages in order to be more successful. English in such classrooms was often taught "monolingually," ideal teachers were native speakers of English, and native language was seen as impeding English learning, advocating for the ideology that "the more English the better" (Pac, 2012). The model of forced English acquisition, through the denial of native cultures, often resulted in children's low self-esteem, low academic achievement, and underrepresentation in higher education (Pac 194).

When non-native English-speaking students in a few high schools and other educational establishments in the United States were introduced to their native languages and were able to express themselves and find acceptance in their social circles, they became significantly more successful. Augustine Romero and Sean Arce from Tucson Unified School District and Julio Cammarota (2009) from University of Arizona, who implemented critical race theory and encouraged students' reflection and participation in their classrooms, found that "…students started to experience greater academic success, and it is therein that our student developed their academic identities." Moreover, instruction in both native languages and English improved students' self-esteem, personal and professional achievement, and educational access (Pac, 2012;

Romero, Arce & Cammarota, 2009; Stritikus, 2002). Among the goals of ethnic studies were promoting acceptance of different nationalities and cultures in the United States while teaching linguistic minorities to become successful without assimilating or denying their native cultures (Romero, Arce & Cammarota, 2009).

But this success went only so far in most cases: instead of promoting bilingual and ethnic studies that could empower and provide non-native students with the tools to successfully navigate the world, many of these were forbidden and declared *un-American*. For example, the HB 2281, passed in Arizona, banned courses in the curriculums of any public or charter school that "1. Promote the overthrow of the United States government; 2. Promote resentment toward a race or class of people; 3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group; and 4. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals" (State of Arizona House of Legislators). While appearing to be neutral in language, the bill is racially charged and specifically targets Mexican Americans and Latinas/os (Elnagar, 2013). It excludes minority populations from public education, silencing the issues of race and ethnicity in education, "In practice, the law excludes, silences, and erases educational access to the cultural knowledge of colonized people in the Southwest" (Elnagar, 2013). In the view of legislators, ethnic studies disturbed the idea of a coherent American national identity, and the ideology of assimilation that tried to erase differences, and defined what it meant to be an American citizen in exclusionary and assimilative ways (Pac, 2012).

In the majority of schools in the United States that did not provide ethnic studies or bilingual education, non-native speakers were forced to assimilate and try harder in order to disprove social and political stereotypes that called them lazy and less intelligent: "This pressure, both implicit and explicit, involves continuing to perform the ways of assimilation that

marginalized peoples learned in order to get into college in the first place" (Martinez, 2009). Not considering institutional systems of inequality, non-native speaking students saw individual effort as the only cause of success, and worked harder to achieve success, as Martinez (2009) puts it:

> I was the "exceptional minority" in these courses, the one who believed the ideological myth that access and retention in higher education are achieved primarily through an individual's effort. Scholastic equal opportunity seemed a reality for all of those students in my cohort, and I believed that those outside of it did not attend college because they "did not value education" and did not want to achieve the American Dream.

Those students were seen as unable to achieve the American Dream because of the qualities in their character and their ethnicity, overlooking that they experienced assimilation, had to suppress their cultural identity, and fight for social inclusion (Martinez, 2009).

Internal Inferiority and Identity Confusion

Social attitudes and stereotypes often resulted in non-native speakers' feeling of inferiority, such as shame in their accent, the desire to limit the use of a native language, and the need to learn to speak "proper" English (Anzaldua, 2007). Linguistic identity is internal to how the person feels, relates, and thinks of oneself, "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (Anzaldúa, 2007). Students who spoke in languages other than English were told that those languages would impede their learning capabilities: "In general, American society historically considers languages other than English and non-standard varieties of English as a problem rather than an asset, and stigmatizes the speakers in the everyday English language, media, films, and advertisement" (Pac, 2012). Media, advertisements, dominant political discourse connected the idea of what it meant

to be an American with the use and knowledge of English language. This was a message to those who do not speak the English language that they did not belong to an American identity, and had to abandon their native tongue in order to fit in (Pac, 2012).

The English language also served as a gatekeeper for the entrance to the majority culture, in which not speaking English was associated with *foreignness* and *difference*. In order to fully belong, one had to suppress one's native language. Individuals were encouraged to try harder to learn English, to blame those who do not appreciate English learning, and to measure their success in education with the level of English (Interviews in Stritikus, 2002). By internalizing the belief that their native language was inferior to English, non-native speakers also felt shame toward their culture and ethnicity (Anzaldua, 2007). As a result, those who had an accent or did not speak English as their native language felt the need to assimilate: "In this circular motion, by denigrating the social, cultural, and economic value of languages other than English and their speakers, the Anglo-Saxon elites perpetuated their privileged position, social inequality, and racism" (Pac, 2012).

The Ukrainian Diaspora in the United States

The case study of the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States exemplifies a form of linguistic imperialism discussed in this paper because Ukrainians experienced Russian linguistic discrimination imposed by the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and then by their own Russian-favoring compatriots during the years of Independent Ukraine. In the Ukrainian Diaspora, Ukrainians struggled to deal with issues of language as well, because the newly-arrived immigrants during the fourth wave of immigration who did not speak the Ukrainian language were not met warmly by the old waves of immigrants who wanted to preserve the authentic and historic form of

Ukrainian culture and tradition. By desiring to fit into the social culture in the United States, Ukrainians were further distanced from the diaspora by learning and promoting communication in English.

Ukrainian Russification and Language Prohibitions

A leading Ukrainian educator Konstantin Ushynskiy has insisted that a language is synonymous with a nation: "Should a language perish, a nation will perish" (Holowinsky, Shimahara, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2001). Ushynskiy was referring to Ukrainian culture and language, specifically Ukrainians' complex relationship to language and their linguistic identity. The close geographical proximity to Russia and decades of living under the Tsarist Russian Empire and the Soviet Union created linguistic confusion among Ukrainians. Their own language was often declared inferior, their cultural artifacts were destroyed, and they could not speak, write or teach in their native language. Most of these efforts were in place to assimilate Ukrainians into Russian society, or, if unfit, destroy their culture and exclude them from political and social life (Satzewich, 2003).

There were three periods of Russification in Ukrainian history that have created the social and psychological divisions between Russian and Ukrainian languages. The first dated period of direct and forced Russification began in 1622 when Tsar Mikhail issued an order to burn all copies of Kyrylo Stavrovetsky's didactic gospels printed in Ukrainian (Antoshevskiy (2010); Virchenko, n.d.). When the Ukrainian language was prohibited, it was a sign to Ukrainian writers, academics, and scholars that their language and culture were inferior to that of the Russian Empire. Russian was recognized as the proper language, associated with intelligence, status, respect, and nobility.

Converting to Russian meant greater opportunities for work, education, and social acceptance in society (Bilaniuk, 2003).

The second period began with the emergence of the Soviet Union during 1917 and lasted till the Soviet collapse in 1991. Language was central to the cohesive national identity of the Soviet Union. Along with declaring Russian as its sole official language, the Soviet Union employed more subtle and communist-ideological methods, as Russian was declared the language of "social interactions" and the language of the "great Lenin" (Holowinsky, Shimahara, & Tomlinson-Clarke 2001). Those who spoke Ukrainian were viewed as bourgeois, nationalistic, separatist, and counterrevolutionary, which was equivalent to the accusation of a crime against the Soviet Union (Dzyuba, 1968).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine struggled to locate its national linguistic identity. The third period of Russification was subtle and more complex. Firstly, there were ethnic Russians remaining on the Ukrainian territory after the borders of the Independent Ukraine were established, who spoke and advocated for Russian while resisting urbanization. Secondly, the legacy of prohibition of Ukrainian and social attitudes that regarded it as a less intelligent and less noble language remained very strong in academic, social, and political discourses (Bilaniuk, 2003). Thirdly, people in most regions in Ukraine began to speak in *syrchuk* - the combination and blend of Ukrainian and Russian without a clear line between the two languages. However, it was still clear that even the attempts to inject Ukrainian within the halls of academia and public policy did little to challenge the social attitudes which regarded Russian as the language of progressive, educated, culturally-aware, and intelligent people (Bilaniuk, 2003).

Along with official language discrimination came the feeling of inferiority: Ukrainians began to think of themselves as little brothers and sisters of Russia (Dzyuba, 1968). Russian was

considered a language of power, high culture, science, and was also more institutionalized among public officials and professors (Bilaniuk, 2003). Students, even when taught in Ukrainian, desired to speak and learn Russian in social environments in order to appear civilized, progressive, and intelligent. Language started to divide people between those who were "true" Ukrainians – those, who spoke in Ukrainian and lived according to Ukrainian cultural traditions and customs, and were often regarded as "villagers;" versus people who lived in the cities, who often communicated in Russian, supported advancement, and active political and social life by distancing themselves from Ukrainian traditions. However, those divisions were not clearly defined, and the majority of individuals were nationalists who spoke in Russian; people who easily communicated in both, depending on their surroundings; and Ukrainians who spoke in Ukrainian but were not fierce supporters of nationalism or patriotism (Bilaniuk, 2003).

Defining 'Ukrainian' as a Legitimate Identity in the United States

Vic Satzewich (2003) identified four different waves of immigration from Ukraine to the United States:

> The first wave, which took place roughly between 1880 and 1914, consisted mainly of labor migrants; the second wave occurred between 1920 and 1930 and consisted of a combination of labor migrants and political refugees; the third wave occurred between 1940 and 1954 and consisted mainly of political refugees; the fourth wave began in the late 1980s and continues to this day. The majority of fourth wave emigrants are labor migrants, although some refugees can also be found within this wave."

People in the Ukrainian Diaspora have a different relationship to their homeland, complex ethnic groups, social divisions, conflicts, and diverse attitudes toward language. The very first large

waves of Ukrainian immigrants came to the U.S. in the 1870s and consisted mostly of people who were too poor to receive an education. They were often labeled as "Russian" or "Austrian" according to the U.S. Immigration Statistics because Ukraine was under Russian and Austrian rule at that time (Radzilowski, 2007). Next came the peasants after the Russian Revolution in the 1920s, who were also poor and occupied the lowest-paid dangerous jobs in the U.S. (Radzilowski, 2007). The third waves consisted of mainly labor workers and political refugees who were escaping from economic, political, and social oppression in the Soviet Union during and after the World War II. The fourth wave occurred after the years of Independent Ukraine when people had the freedom to travel and emigrate, and consisted of people joining their families abroad or looking for better job opportunities and education (Radzilowski, 2007). The main difference between the waves was that the first immigrants had to occupy unskilled jobs, lived in poor areas, faced harsher discrimination at home and abroad, whereas later waves had greater access to education, social acceptance, and political protection (Satzewich, 2003). As a result, the Ukrainian Diaspora had elements of "a labor diaspora, a victim diaspora, and a cultural diaspora" at different points in time in the United States (Satzewich, 2003).

Because of the complex relationship to their ethnic identity in Ukraine, the first-wave of Ukrainian immigrants to the United States defined themselves as Ukrainians in the diaspora: "…the irony in the case of Ukrainians…is that their consciousness of themselves as 'Ukrainian' did not develop until they were *in* the diaspora and was not part of the baggage that they *brought to* the diaspora…many first-wave migrants became 'Ukrainian' in the diaspora" (Satzewich, 2003). Ukrainians wanted to establish "Ukrainian" as a legitimate identity because of their stateless identity in Ukraine, and in response to social, academic, and political exclusion in the United States (Satzewich, 2000).

The stateless identity of Ukrainians was informed by politics of the Russian Empire that tried to assimilate Ukrainians into Russian society by eliminating Ukrainian culture, traditions, artifacts, and historical narratives. People who immigrated to escape from political, social, and economic repressions during the Tsarist rule, looking for appropriate work and social life conditions, defined themselves as Ukrainians in the U.S. and formed their diaspora because of the freedom to express and identify with Ukrainian culture, "… this [the diaspora] was the first chance that many Ukrainians had to be Ukrainian and to express freely the symbolic aspects of their identity and heritage" (Satzewich, 2003). American political, economic and social elites needed to make sense of new immigrants from the Tsarist Russia: "The stateless Ukrainians - incorporated into the Tsarist Russian empire - were at the physical and symbolic periphery of Europe, and thus there was plenty of ambiguity about who they were…pre-existing racialized discourses were superimposed upon the Ukrainian immigrants to make sense of who they were" (Satzewich, 2000).

Moreover, Ukrainians were also forced to develop their distinct identity in response to racial stereotypes and accusations of unfitness to be characterized as American citizens. They were often regarded as those who lived in poor areas and occupied the least skilled jobs:

> Ukrainian immigrants were often regarded as "the scum of the continent" who "diseased" the upstanding communities within which English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Germans, and Americans lived. This kind of hostile ideological climate often became translated into "everyday racism" directed against Ukrainians and other eastern European immigrants. (Satzewich, 2000)

In response to the climate of hostility, some Ukrainians tried to separate themselves from Ukrainian culture completely, losing ties to language, customs, and family. The majority, however, started developing their unique cultural communities across the United States, since they needed

the support of the diaspora in order to have a fulfilled social life (Radzilowski, 2007). Because they were rejected by mainstream institutions and society, they formed organizations, churches, educational groups, markets, and other social activities to solidify their identity (Satzewich, 2000).

During the later waves of immigration, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and during the years of Independent Ukraine, most people left Ukraine for personal reasons such as family reunification, job opportunities and education (Radzilowski, 2007). They were often more educated, progressively-oriented, and distant from historic Ukrainian traditions. An article in the *Ukrainian Weekly* newspaper described the difficult relationship between the "old" and "new" immigrants:

> ...all the previous waves from Ukraine, despite differences in education or political beliefs, shared a common commitment to their Ukrainian heritage, whether it was their Church, or their language, or their culture and traditions. This long-term commitment does not seem to be present in many Fourth Wave immigrants, in fact, there often seems to be a disdain for things Ukrainian (Sasynuik, 1999).

The fourth wave of immigrants did not need the strong sense of themselves as Ukrainians or the support of the diaspora to be accepted into social and political life in the United States because they were educated, socially progressive, and, sometimes, had or quickly acquired sufficient knowledge and skills of English.

Language Complexities within the Ukrainian Diaspora

The first waves of immigration during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created distinctly Ukrainian communities that spoke, praised, taught, and advocated for the use of

the Ukrainian language. While most of the first waves of immigrants that came during the Russian or learned and adapted in the diaspora, most people from the later waves of immigration during the Soviet period were more comfortable speaking Russian; they were not as comfortable with Ukrainian (Satzewich, 2003). As a result, the period from the 1990s to the present created divisions in the diaspora, in which "old" immigrants did not accept "new" Ukrainians, and refused to call them "true" Ukrainians:

> Given the widespread use of Russian in Ukraine during the Soviet period, many of the new immigrants are more comfortable speaking Russian than Ukrainian. But Ukrainians in the diaspora bristle when they hear new Ukrainian arrivals speak what in the diaspora was defined as the language of oppression in Ukraine; nor do they understand why any 'good' Ukrainian would choose to use that language. (Satzewich, 2003)

Ukrainians in the diaspora felt that they put effort into preserving cultural roots, maintaining the Ukrainian language and customs, and were deeply disappointed that many newly arrived Ukrainians in the United States did not express an interest in maintaining native traditions (Satzewich, 2003). In response to that hostile treatment, the new immigrants were hesitant to join diaspora and adapt to its language because to them it seemed as an archaic remnant of the turn-of-the century Ukrainian spoken in villages in Galicia in Western Ukraine (Wilson 2000). It was considered a "peasant" Ukrainian that seemed "incomprehensible to speakers of modern Ukrainian" (Satzewich, 2003). As a result, the Ukrainian diaspora, by trying to preserve the "authentic" Ukrainian language and culture, began to distance itself from the new immigrants because they were not "true" Ukrainians. As it rejected the new waves of immigrants, it started losing its connections to life in contemporary Ukraine, making it harder to pass on Ukrainian traditions in the United States.

The English language has created further complexities within the Ukrainian diaspora. The later waves of immigrants from Ukraine (from 1991 to the present) sometimes were able to learn English in their homeland, received better education, and did not face the similar level of discrimination in regard to their Ukrainian roots as the previous generations. Those factors allowed new immigrants to distance themselves further from the diaspora, because they did not need its support in order to assimilate and be accepted into American culture. The climate in the United States that encouraged cultural assimilation influenced Ukrainians, willingly or unwillingly, to desire distance from their traditions in order to successfully fit into social life (Radzilowski, 2007). Fedunkiw(n.d.), while discussing the contemporary situation of the Ukrainian diaspora, writes that, "…less than 17 percent of people of Ukrainian descent said Ukrainian was their primary language - and the future of the Ukrainian-American community can seem uncertain." The English language was one of the factors that contributed and reinforced the desire for that assimilation, because having better English skills could open doors for Ukrainian immigrants into better social and political opportunities (Radzilowski, 2007).

Those desires of acceptance experienced by Ukrainian immigrants are similar to those of Native American, Chicano/a, and other non-native English speaking groups in the United States, who felt the pressure to assimilate by distancing themselves from their own culture. Their lack of success was often blamed on their inability to speak English, therefore, influencing non-native speakers to seek inclusion and abandon their native languages and traditions. (Anzaldua, 2007; Radzilowski, 2007). Moreover, those individuals were often pressured to pick between (a) resisting assimilation and being accepted within their native community or (b) abandoning their native culture and being socially accepted in the United States. Challenging that either/or choice could be liberating to those seeking the acceptance of diversity. Instead of assimilating or excluding non-

native speakers, the social environment needs to be accepting of the fluidity and intersections of different linguistic identities.

Conclusion

This case study of Ukraine and how social attitudes and linguistic imperialism have impacted the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States demonstrates the complexities of language attitudes and how the factor of individual blame only divides and disconnects cultural communities. Firstly, it is necessary to take into account the complexities of language and communication in the society of diverse residents. Secondly, there needs to be a shift from blaming individuals to examining larger institutions in place.

Immigration, cross-cultural exchanges, travelling, and global communication have developed new linguistic identities that are constantly changing and re-defining themselves. Static understandings of languages continue supporting the hegemonic structures that reinforce inequality and exclusion between citizens and non-citizens. They reinforce inequality and exclusion by creating fixed characteristics that define what it is to belong to the larger society. In those excluded groups, as evidenced by the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States, language serves as an entrance exam that defines and separates “true” members of a culture versus those who are said to be traitors.

If people in society view language as complex, fluid, and changing, then the communities will be more accepting toward individuals who speak multiple languages and have accents. As a result, non-native speakers, instead of seeking assimilation, would be encouraged to appreciate and accept their ethnic and cultural differences in the United States. Shifting attention from individual blame to institutional practices and structures could have the potential to challenge

linguistic imperialism, exclusion, educational hegemony, and find more accepting and liberating methods of addressing the issues of language. Challenging social and political institutions is a lengthy and complex process, but awareness about the issues of linguistic imperialism can serve as beneficial and important step in this process.

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